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A model of command, leadership and management competency in the British Royal Navy

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Abstract

Purpose – To develop a model clarifying the personal factors and behavioural characteristics (competencies) relevant to effective command, leadership and management in the Royal Navy.

Design/methodology/approach – A questionnaire study was conducted on a sample of 261 Officers and ratings. Their performance was rated through the organisation's own rigorous appraisal process whilst personality and competency data were gathered through the use of the well-established occupational personality questionnaire (OPQ) and the relatively new leadership dimensions questionnaire (LDQ).

Findings – The results provide support for the RN's current integrated approach to command, leadership and management by identifying four "supra-competency" clusters – conceptualising, aligning, interacting and creating success – and the related personality and leadership dimensions, which are correlated with high performance. Support for the validity of the LDQ and OPQ questionnaires is also produced by the results found from performance appraisal data.

Research limitations/implications – The research was conducted within one establishment of one of the services (the RN). Further replication studies in other services and private sector companies are planned or underway.

Practical implications – The model produced from this study is now being used by the British Royal Navy as the basis of command, leadership and management training and development and its use by the Admiralty Interview Board for Officer selection is currently under consideration. Some findings are generalisable to other organisations.

Originality/value – This is a rare example of a study of leadership validated against formal performance appraisal data. The fact that conclusions are drawn from an appraisal system which conforms to best practice and from a highly representative sample, with a 97 per cent response rate, supports the value of these findings for both academic researchers and practitioners.

Keywords Leadership, Competences, Armed forces, Managers

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

As long as there remains potential gain to be derived "from identifying the relationships between managerial success and individual attributes, there is a clear need for studies exploring links between managerial performance, specific competencies and underlying personality" (Robertson *et al.*, 1999, p. 6). But it should be noted that a person's sets of competencies only reflect his or her capability. "They are describing what he or she can do, not necessarily what he or she does, nor does all the time regardless of the situation and setting" (Boyatzis, 1982, p. 23). A specific job will "consist of a set of deliverables, outputs or roles, (competence) each of which requires a number of individual competencies" (Woodruffe, 1992, p. 17). It is clear, therefore, that competency and competence, although linguistically very similar, "are

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not alternative approaches to the same concept, as some people have gone into print as saying. They are totally different concepts" (Moloney, 1997, p. 33). The essential distinction is between aspects of the job at which the person is competent, and aspects of the person that enable him or her to be competent (Woodruffe, 1992). However, although the two concepts are discrete they may also be complimentary as Young (2002) has shown in Figure 1.

The broader the individual's competency repertoire, the more likely that he or she will have the underlying characteristics required to perform or excel within the specific occupational competence framework. Equally as the occupational competence point of aim changes, whether through promotion or role change, so different competencies may well be required. Although the causal link that defines competency (Spencer and Spencer, 1993) flows from left to right, a more appropriate organisational perspective might be from right to left. This "outside-in" approach is championed by Morgan (1998) who sees it "helping organisations understand their distinctive character and competencies" (p. 35) which in turn allows them to "enhance (their) capacity to rise to challenges and opportunities in an ongoing way" (p. 5). Clarifying the content and relationship between the desired performance, required job activities and the underlying competencies is crucial as "many organisations, in concentrating on specific traits or qualities, stand in danger of losing sight of their real concern: what a man can accomplish" (Katz, 1974). This is particularly germane in the service environment where achievement of the mission may have to take precedence over the welfare and safety of personnel or the preservation of assets. As a result the linkage between command, leadership and management in the British Royal Navy (RN) has been articulated by the first author, and endorsed by the Royal Navy, in the form of a policy which keeps the focus on "Getting Things Done" and is shown in Figure 2.

The integrated and holistic nature of command, leadership and management shown in Figure 2 becomes more apparent by examining the activities which underpin them. Table I compares the key tenets of mission command (British Defence Doctrine, 2002) with those of leadership and management as proposed by Kotter (1990).

In common with other members of the "New Leadership School" (Bryman, 1992) who "constructed their notions of leadership around contrasts with the role of management" (Conger and Kanungo, 1998, p. 7), Kotter (1990, p. 103) proposes that "management is about coping with complexity. Leadership, by contrast is about

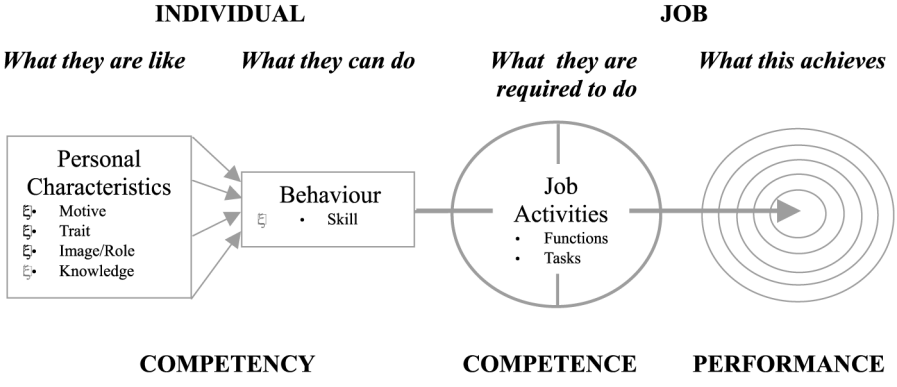

Figure 1.
Linking competency and competence to performance

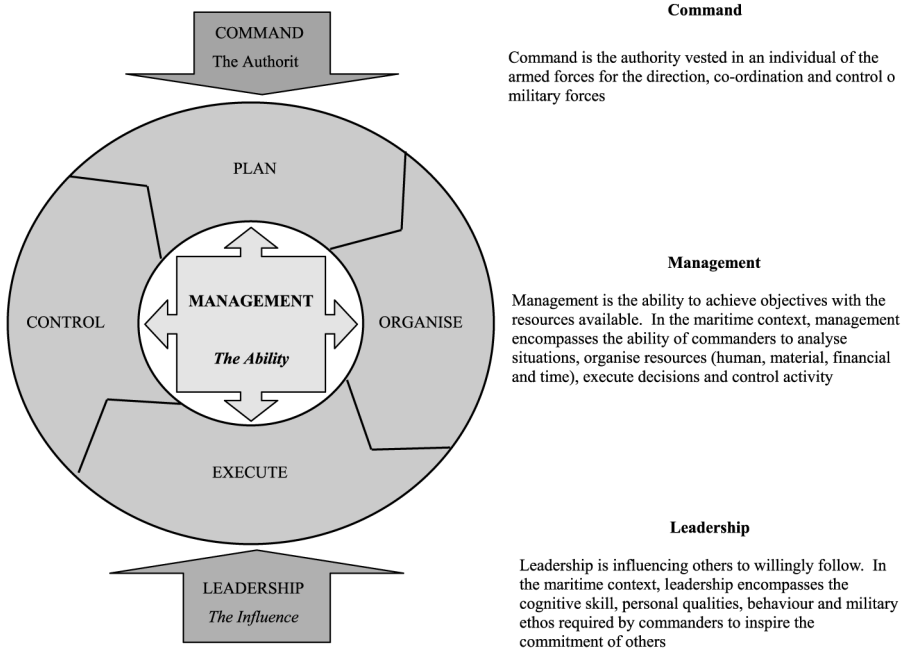

Figure 2.
The "Getting Things Done" model of command, leadership and management

Mission command (Coping with challenge)	Leadership (Coping with change)	Management (Coping with complexity)
Clarifying superior intent	Setting a direction	Planning and budgeting
Ensuring subordinate ability to meet remit	Aligning people	Organising and staffing
Timely decision making	Motivating	Controlling and problem solving
Success through determination	Mastery of the context	Control of the environment

Table I.
Command, leadership and management

coping with change". This echoes the manager as regulator, leader as change agent view of Zaleznick (1977) and the visionary leader and organisational manager of Bennis and Nanus (1997). In combining the New School view of leadership and management with the Services' own direction on command it appears that, in dealing with challenge, change and complexity, each of the command/leadership/management trinity involves:

- conceptualising what needs to be done;
- aligning people and resources;
- taking an active role in, etc. and
- creating success.

The similarity of these command, leadership and management activities suggests the existence of individual, or clusters, of underlying competencies, which would support

effective performance across all three activities. This proposition is broadly supported by the findings from some significant studies of management competencies (Boyatzis, 1982; Schroder, 1989; Dulewicz, 1994) and the view that effective leaders are differentiated from other leaders through the exercise of just such a relatively small range of skill or competence areas is reflective of the "emerging school" of leadership (Higgs, 2003) which puts more focus on what the leader actually does and includes impact on followers as a determinant of leadership effectiveness.

However, many organisations do not yet fully examine the significance, or exploit the value, of competency models. In fact the "competencies" that many organisations are using are not competencies, i.e. defined in precise behavioural terms, at all. "Although this finding is well established in the academic literature, it appears to have little influence on practice which continues to seek and use competencies whose existence is chimerical" (Cockerill *et al.*, 1995, p. 9). The first author, as Head of Leadership and Management Development for the Royal Navy, wanted to ensure that the nature of successful command, leadership and management implicit in one of the most successful war fighting organisations in the world (Gordon, 1999), was made explicit in competency terms. And whilst "even a complete understanding of the specific personal factors involved in determining managerial behaviour would provide an incomplete model for understanding and predicting managerial performance, since situational factors have a clear role to play. Nevertheless a clear grasp of these personal attributes should provide some help in seeking to unravel the complex interplay of behavioural, situational and personal factors" (Robertson *et al.*, 1999, p. 5).

Method

In supporting the development of a competencies-based model for selection, training and development applications in the Royal Navy this study attempts to adopt a "multimethod" approach by drawing on both the worker-orientated (competency) and the work-orientated (competence) methodology suggested in the model in Figure 1. It investigates the personality factors and competencies associated with performance using two instruments, the occupational personality questionnaire (OPQ) and a new leadership questionnaire, the leadership dimensions questionnaire (LDQ) (described below), by correlating results with performance ratings of Officers and ratings in the RN.

Instruments

The occupational personality questionnaire. The OPQ (SHL, 1999) was developed specifically to provide a comprehensive, detailed description of personality likely to be relevant in an occupational context. The theoretical basis of the OPQ is similar to that of other trait-based measures of personality and proposes that cross situational, stable differences in temperament and disposition, which play some role in determining behaviour, can be identified and measured with the aid of self-report questionnaires. The forced choice, ipsative scale was used in this study, designed to measure 32 personality factors, with similar scales grouped under eight sub-headings. Titles of OPQ factors are presented in Table II.

The leadership dimensions questionnaire (LDQ). Dulewicz and Higgs (1999, 2000a) examined the validity of emotional intelligence using job competency data and went on to design a questionnaire, based on an extensive review of the EI literature in order to

LDQ factors	OPQ factors and groups		
Intellectual (IQ)	*Emotion*	*Sociability*	
Critical analysis and judgement	Relaxed	Outgoing	
Vision and imagination	Worried	Affiliative	
Strategic perspective	Tough minded	Social confidence	
	Optimistic		
Management (MQ)	Trusting	*Structure*	
Managing resources	Emotional control	Detail-conscious	
Engaging communication		Conscientious	
Empowering	*Dynamism*	Rule following	
Developing	Decisive	Forward thinking	
Achieving	Vigour		
	Competitive	*Analysis*	
Social and emotional (EQ)	Achievement	Data-rational	
Self-awareness		Evaluative	
Resilience	*Influence*	Behavioural	
Motivation	Persuasive		
Sensitivity	Controlling	*Creativity and change*	
Influence	Outspoken	Conventional	
Intuitiveness	Independent	Conceptual	
Conscientiousness		Innovative	
	Empathy	Variety seeking	
	Modest	Adaptable	
	Democratic		
	Caring		

Table II.
Titles of LDQ and OPQ factors and groups

measure the construct directly (Dulewicz and Higgs, 2000b). They discovered that many elements in their EI model (1999) also appeared in the models of authorities on the subject of leadership. Through content analysis of the constructs of the leadership literature from the "Transformational" period onwards, strong indications of linkages between leadership and emotional intelligence dimensions appeared. On the basis of this review the authors identified eight additional leadership dimensions related to intellectual ("IQ") and managerial ("MQ") competencies to add to the seven emotional and social ("EQ") elements. Full definitions of all the LDQ dimensions are provided by Dulewicz and Higgs (2003, 2005) while titles of the LDQ factors are presented in Table II.

Performance measures. The Royal Navy's Divisional System and associated appraisal process can be traced back to 1755. This heritage has ensured that the current Ratings and Other Ranks Report (RORRS) and the Officer's Joint Appraisal Report (OJAR) are sophisticated appraisal systems that conform with Zigon's (1994) guidelines for performance appraisal best practice. The reports capture details of the contextual demands of the job in terms of rank and function as well as providing a rating of current performance and future potential. The scale guides and definitions for both Ratings and Officers are presented by Young and Dulewicz (2003).

Sample

The study was conducted in the Maritime Warfare School (MWS), the RN's largest unit in terms of manpower, most of whom either arrive from, or depart to an operational job or administrative HQ. Young and Dulewicz (2003) report that, when compared with the

official figures for the entire RN, the sample is highly representative of the RN. Moreover, as all are appraised through the same chain, limiting the study in this way increased the reliability of the performance criterion. Accordingly, the total population of RN "managers" within the MWS (280 personnel), from first line supervisory to executive board, were surveyed in this study. The respondent sample consisted of 271 Officers and ratings – a 97 per cent response rate. Biographical details of respondents are summarised as follows. The average (mean) age was 36.7 years with a standard deviation of 6.23. A large majority of the sample was male (93 per cent), reflecting the breakdown throughout the RN. Looking at the level at which they worked, 40 per cent were officers and 60 per cent were in other ranks. As regards their highest qualification, 58 per cent had "A" levels, 28 per cent had a first or higher degree and a further 8 per cent had professional qualifications.

Procedure

Questionnaires were coded and administered remotely through a co-ordinator in each department, as agreed with the publishers of the questionnaires. Participants derived a development opportunity since each was offered comprehensive feedback reports produced from both questionnaires. This offer most probably facilitated the high response rate. However, one cost of remote administration was that some questionnaires were in some way incorrectly completed, leaving a maximum of 256 respondents on OPQ. Finally, the letter based (A $-$, B $+$, etc.) ordinal ratings on the Officers and Ratings appraisal forms were transposed into a numerical scale and then standardised. Raw scores from OPQ and LDQ were used and all analyses were conducted using SPSS for windows, version 11.

Hypothesis

"Deductive method is referred to as moving from the general to the particular" (Hussey and Hussey, 1997, p. 13) and this is very much the nature of this study. Generally recognised theories about competency and competence as well as leadership and management will be tested in the specific environment of the Royal Navy. "Under (such) a positivistic paradigm, it is traditional to state the research questions as hypotheses, particularly if you are conducting an experimental study" (Hussey and Hussey, 1997, pp. 126-7). The hypothesis and sub-hypotheses presented below link theories drawn from the literature discussed previously (Boyatzis, 1982; Schroder, 1989; Kotter, 1990; Dulewicz, 1994) to the data gathering instruments.

H1. A statistically significant positive relationship exists between superior overall performance grade and/or leadership/management appraisals and higher scale scores (Table III).

Results

A high degree of hypothesised convergent and divergent evidence was found within the questionnaire intercorrelation patterns (Young and Dulewicz, 2003). Additionally 34 per cent of the OPQ personality scales and 73 per cent of the LDQ dimensions were found to be significantly correlated with overall performance. Together these findings provide comprehensive support for the construct and criterion (concurrent) validity of the instruments in this setting.

	OPQ	LDQ
Conceptualise	1.1 Conceptual	1.3 Critical analysis and judgement
	1.2 Innovative	1.4 Vision and imagination
		1.5 Strategic perspective
Align	1.6 Controlling	1.9 Resource management
	1.7 Forward thinking	1.10 Empowering
	1.8 Conscientious	1.11 Developing
Interact	1.12 Socially confident	1.15 Engaging communication
	1.13 Outgoing	1.16 Interpersonal sensitivity
	1.14 Persuasive	1.17 Influence
Create success	1.18 Vigorous	1.20 Emotional resilience
	1.19 Achieving	1.21 Motivation
		1.22 Self awareness
		1.23 Achieving
		1.24 Conscientiousness

Table III.

Competencies and overall job performance

Table IV illustrates that the hypothesis was confirmed by either assessments of overall performance, leadership, management or a combination of the three in 80 per cent of the sub-hypotheses. Moreover, the findings support the supra-competency theory as a statistically significant positive relationship exists between the assessment of either overall performance, leadership, management or any combination of the three and the scales and dimensions shown in Table V.

High performance competencies across levels of command

In order to seek more distinction between the competencies of superior performers and their below average counterparts, further analysis was conducted. Superior performance is statistically defined as one standard deviation above average performance (Hunter *et al.*, 1990; Spencer and Spencer, 1993), although (Boyatzis, 1982, p. 46) is less specific. Previous discrimination methods have included Boyatzis (1982, Appendix A) poor (bottom 13-17 per cent), average (middle 55-60 per cent) and superior (top 27-31 per cent) groupings whilst Dulewicz and Herbert (1999) compare top and bottom one-thirds. In this study, isolating the differentiating competencies was achieved by comparing, as near as possible given the distribution of the assessment grades, the top and bottom one-thirds. For overall performance this resulted in comparing the top 33 per cent (Z score >0.4) with the bottom 31 per cent (Z score <-0.2), for leadership comparing the top 30 per cent (Z Score >0.7) with the bottom 37 per cent (Z score <-0.58) and finally, for management comparing the top 22 per cent (Z score >0.7) with the bottom 30 per cent (Z score <-0.5). The significantly different scale scores are summarised in Table VI (Young and Dulewicz, 2003).

Boyatzis (1982, p. 232) observed that although it would be difficult to propose a framework for the varying day-to-day situational demands of a job, the underlying job/organisational functional requirements will reward a "maximum fit" between their demands and individuals' competencies. So despite the fact that the 261 individuals in the study are employed across a wide range of specialist activities, as their common requirement is to command, lead and manage, this must be being met in high performance terms by the clusters of competencies shown in Tables IV and V.

Competencies (OPQ and LDQ)	Overall performance	*Z* scores Leadership	Management
Conceptualise			
Conceptual	0.00	−0.02	−0.11
Innovative	0.07	0.11	0.12
Critical analysis	0.14*	0.08	0.11
Vision	0.22**	0.23**	0.22**
Perspective	0.10	0.07	0.12
Align			
Controlling	0.12	0.23**	0.10
Forward thinking	0.04	0.13*	0.19**
Conscientious (OPQ)	0.13*	0.10	0.17**
Managing	0.22**	0.18**	0.20**
Empowering	0.16**	0.14*	0.15*
Developing	0.21**	0.18**	0.16**
Interact			
Socially confident	0.10	0.1	0.01
Outgoing	0.05	0.05	−0.02
Persuasive	0.09	0.16*	0.09
Communication	0.21**	0.21**	0.19**
Sensitivity	0.15*	0.11	0.11
Influencing	0.19**	0.17**	0.13*
Create			
Vigour	0.16**	0.20**	0.11
Achievement (OPQ)	0.17**	0.08	0.17**
Resilience	0.18**	0.16*	0.11
Motivation	0.26**	0.26**	0.21**
Self aware	0.12	0.15*	0.13*
Achieving (LDQ)	0.08	0.10	0.10
Conscientious (LDQ)	0.13*	0.10	0.17**
N 247-256			

Notes: Correlation is significant at the: *0.05 level; and ** 0.01 level

Table IV.
All ranks performance and hypothesised LDQ/OPQ correlations

Similarly the significant preferences for the same clusters of competencies shown in Table VI help to define the difference between superior and below average performance across (command) performance, leadership and management. Taken together, these findings provide support for the designation of what could be described as the command, leadership and management procedural supra-competencies.

- *Conceptualise*. Get and share the picture of what needs to be achieved by developing perspective, exercising critical analysis and judgement, being innovative where required, effective planning and the ability to transform these cerebral activities into a vision that provides unambiguous focus for team members.
- *Align*. Focus controllable assets by taking responsibility for converting plans into action; providing an example by being reliable, organised and conscientious; in so doing get people moving in the right direction through appropriate use of control, empowerment, delegation and subordinate development.

Table V.
Correlations between LDQ OPQ scales and assessments of overall performance, leadership and management

Supra-competency	Overall performance Competency/trait	*r*	Leadership Competency/trait	*r*	Management Competency/trait	*r*
Conceptualise	Vision and imagination	0.22**	Vision and imagination	0.23**	Vision and imagination	0.21**
	Critical analysis	0.14*				
	Not conventional	0.17**	*Not* conventional	0.22**	*Not* conventional	0.14*
					Innovative	0.12*
Align	Managing resources	0.22**	Managing resources	0.18**	Managing resources	0.20**
	Developing	0.21**	Developing	0.18**	Developing	0.16**
	Empowering	0.16*	Empowering	0.14*	Empowering	0.15*
	Not worrying	0.13*	*Not* worrying	0.15*		
			Forward thinking	0.13*	Forward thinking	0.19**
			Controlling	0.23**		
			Not rule following	0.13*		
Interact	Engaging comms	0.21**	Engaging comms	0.21**	Engaging comms	0.19**
	Influencing	0.18**	Influencing	0.17**	Influencing	0.13*
	Interpers sensitivity	0.15*				
	Not tough minded	0.13*	*Not* tough minded	0.13*	*Not* tough minded	0.16**
			Not adaptable	0.12*	*Not* adaptable	0.12*
	Not em controlled	0.17**	*Not* em controlled	0.23**		
			Persuasive	0.16*		
Create success	*Not* indep minded	0.17**				
	Motivation	0.26**	Motivation	0.25**	Motivation	0.21**
	Emotional resilience	0.18**	Emotional resilience	0.16**		
	Conscientiousness	0.12*			Conscientiousness	0.17**
			Self awareness	0.14*	Self awareness	0.13*
	Vigourous	0.16**	Vigourous	0.21**		
	Achieving	0.17**	Achieving	0.23**		
	Conscientious	0.13*				

Notes: Correlation is significant at the: *0.05 level; and ** 0.01 level

Supra-competency Conceptualise	Overall performance Trait/competency	Sig	Leadership Trait/competency	Sig	Management Trait/competency	Sig
	Vision and imagination	0.00	Vision and imagination	0.00	Vision and imagination	0.00
	Not conventional	0.01	*Not* conventional	0.00	*Not* conventional	0.01
			Innovative	0.04		
Align	Managing resources	0.00			Managing resources	0.00
	Empowering	0.00				
	Developing	0.00				
	Not worrying	0.05				
			Optimistic	0.03		
	Controlling	0.02	Controlling	0.05		
			Not rule following	0.03		
			Forward thinking	0.05	Forward thinking	0.01
Interact	Engaging comms	0.00	Engaging comms	0.05	Engaging comms	0.00
	Interperson sensitivity	0.01				
					Influencing	0.01
	Not tough minded	0.05			*Not* tough minded	0.01
	Not independent mind	0.03				
			Not adaptable	0.04		
	Motivation	0.00	Motivation	0.01	Motivation	0.00
	Emotional resilience	0.01	Emotional resilience	0.05		
					Conscientiousness	0.00
Create success	Vigourous	0.00	Vigourous	0.02	Vigourous	0.03
	Achieving	0.04	Achieving	0.00	Achieving	0.02

Table VI.
Competencies of superior (v average) performers: on overall performance, leadership and management

- *Interact*. Work with and through other people sensitive to the contrasting needs for influence and freedom of action; using effective decision making, interpersonal sensitivity and communication to energise team performance.
- *Create success*. Make a habit of delivering results through professional effectiveness, personal determination, commitment to teamwork and the effective and efficient use of the available organisational infrastructure and skills of its people.

Discussion

"At the core of every manager's job is the requirement to make things happen toward a goal or consistent with a plan" (Boyatzis, 1982, p. 60). When dealing with physical resources, Fayol's (1916) management functions provide a framework "which has withstood a half-century (and more) of critical discussion" (Pugh and Hickson, 1996, p. 101). However, in leading people, a more "emotional" (Bennis and Nannus, 1997, p. 85) approach to these functions is required, as proposed by Kotter (1990, pp. 103-11). The similarity of these activities to those of command was identified in Table I which led to the hypothesis that clusters of competencies reflective of earlier studies (Boyatzis, 1982; Schroder, 1989; Dulewicz, 1994) would predict superior performance in the RN because they allowed the individuals to carry out the functions of management, exercise command and lead others more effectively when compared with their less successful counterparts.

Boyatzis (1982, p. 233) proposed that competencies in a goal and action management cluster will enable a manager to perform the planning function effectively. Within this study superior performers demonstrated similar "goal elucidation" skills of vision and imagination, perspective, within a pragmatic framework, and critical analysis and judgement. However, these conceptualising competencies are just as supportive of clarifying superior intent in command or setting a direction in leadership. Similarly, the aligning competencies found in this study, which support focusing controllable activities behind the chosen course of action, not only support "managerial impact and influence" (Spencer and Spencer, 1993, p. 45) but also help ensure subordinate ability to meet the command remit and to align leadership through empowerment (Kotter, 1990). Of the four clusters or supra-competencies, it is probably easiest to comprehend the universal applicability of the interpersonal sensitivity, influence and communication skills required to interact, whether it be in management co-ordination and problem solving, leadership motivation or command decision making. Finally, the personal motivation, vigour and conscientious commitment that will lead to managerial control of the environment will also support leadership mastery and command success. The difference is that the same supra-competencies when supporting command produce a more "executive" function as the key tenet is the exercise of authority; in leadership a more "emotional" output is required as the desire is to influence people; and finally management will require the "rational" application of the competencies to best use resources (Young, 2005) as shown in Table VII.

The findings of this study are already being used to help improve the understanding of the constructs of command, leadership and management within the Royal Navy. Through the lens of the model in Table VII, a year spent conducting command estimates (a military decision-making tool) on the advanced command and

Competency cluster	Activity Command (exercising the authority)	Leadership (influencing the people)	Management (using the resources)
Conceptualise – get the picture	Clarifies the superior intent, exercising critical analysis and judgement to accurately establish the required contribution to the overall strategy	Sets a direction based on the important imperatives and in so doing creates a vision that provides a clear unambiguous focus for team members	Adopts a strategic perspective, plans innovative and integrated goals for the future, to deliver effective and efficient performance
Align – focus controllable assets	Confident to decentralise command by accepting responsibility for tasking, delegating accordingly and ensuring subordinate ability to meet the remit	Aligns people, getting them moving in the same direction by being credible, demonstrating integrity and empowering appropriately	Converts long term goals into action, managing risk where appropriate Organises tasks, sets SMART targets and develops subordinates to maximise their potential contribution
Interact – work with and through other people	Takes charge, making timely and effective decisions, promoting freedom and speed of action and initiative whilst remaining responsive to superior direction	Energises team performance using communication and empathy to support the required interpersonal relationships	Influences the operating environment by monitoring and evaluating performance then taking action, where appropriate, to ensure the required standards are being met
Create success – habitually deliver results	Succeeds through professional effectiveness, commitment to the task and unwavering determination to achieve objectives	Delivers performance through personal commitment and involvement in the creation and maintenance of teams	Achieves results through effectively deploying and constantly improving the infrastructure of the organisation and the skills of its people

Table VII.
The Royal Navy's command, leadership and management competencies model

staff course can be better understood as developing the critical analysis and judgement, vision and imagination and perspective found to be so reflective of superior command leadership and management performance. Similarly, the apparently mundane and time wasting activity of drawing stores prior to adventurous training is a perfect example of alignment activity. It is a function of Resource Management to ensure the waterproof zip works in the store, but a test of emotional resilience if this is not discovered until on a mountaintop!

The model shown in Table VII has been accepted by the Royal Navy as the basis for command, leadership and management selection, training and development and its full implementation is the aim of the Second Sea Lord's (the Navy's Head of HR) enduring leadership campaign.

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